

repressing the ancient. He had hoped to convert the world by his own example; but, though he failed in this, he never contemplated a resort to violence. His religious policy, throughout his reign, may fairly be described as one of toleration. That is what Symmachus meant when he said, half a century later, that Constantine had belonged to both religions.

There was one exception to this rule. Constantine came down with a heavy hand on secret divination and the practice of magic and the black arts. But other Emperors before him had done the same, Emperors whose loyalty to the Roman religion had never been questioned—for these mysterious rites formed no part of the established worship. They might be employed to the harm of the State; they might portend danger to the Emperor's life and throne. It was not for private individuals to experiment with and let loose the powers of darkness, for, as a rule, beneficent deities had no part or lot in these dark mysteries. As a Christian, Constantine would have a double satisfaction in issuing edicts against the wonder-working charlatans who abounded in the great cities; but the point is that in attacking them he was not technically attacking the old State religion. The public and official haruspices were not interfered with if any devout pagan still desired to consult an oracle, no obstacle was placed in his way; and, as a tribute to the universal superstition of the age from which he himself was not free, even private divination was permitted when the object was a good one, such as the restoration of a sick